

Facts & Information

August 1999

Minimum Long-Distance Charges

Many of the major long-distance companies are requiring their customers to pay a minimum monthly amount for their toll service. These minimums vary between company and do not apply to customers whose toll charges exceed the minimum amount. For example, if the minimum is \$3 per month, a customer who incurs \$3.20 in toll charges will not be affected by the minimum. But a customer who incurs only \$1 in toll charges during a month will get a bill of \$3--in addition to all other fees and taxes that the company applies to the bill.

What if I'm not happy with fees charged by my current carrier?

You can choose another toll carrier. Not all long-distance companies apply minimum monthly charges. In choosing a long-distance carrier, it's important to consider not just the per-minute rate but also any additional fees or minimum bill requirements. Compare the overall phone bill you would pay. All toll carriers are required to provide rates and terms on their web sites. In addition, the UTC has a fact sheet on shopping for toll carriers which is available at the commission's web site: www.wutc.wa.gov or by request 1-800-562-6150.

If you choose to switch toll carriers you may be assessed a one-time charge by your local telephone company to cover the cost of converting your long-distance account to the new company. Ask your new company if it will reimburse you for this cost.



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Local: (360)664-1160
Toll Free: 800-562-6150
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Web site: www.wutc.wa.gov
Email: info@wutc.wa.gov

All UTC publications are
available in alternate formats.
Call (360)664-1133.

Example of Minimum Fees	
Long-Distance Carrier	Minimum Monthly Charge
AT&T	\$3
MCI	\$3
Excel	\$1 or \$4.95 depending on plan
Sprint	\$5

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Is it possible to not have a long-distance carrier?

You may call your local telephone company and ask that your long-distance company be dropped and that you go without a presubscribed long-distance provider. You will be charged \$1.04 cents per month which will go directly to your local telephone company. You may also be charged a one-time administrative fee by your local telephone company. Some companies charge up to \$5. You must also call your long-distance carrier and ask them to cancel service. Before going through this trouble, consider carefully whether such a decision will be best for you. If you still make long-distance calls, you may end up paying more than you currently do.

(Customers of Ellensburg Telephone Company do not have this option of going without an assigned long-distance company.)

If I drop my long-distance carrier, how do I make long-distance calls?

Most, but not all, customers are able to dial an access code to reach a long-distance carrier (i.e., 10-10-345) . However, customers need to be aware that while some 10-10 numbers are competitively priced, others charge very high “casual calling” rates. Shop carefully before using a long-distance company access code.

Another option is to buy a pre-paid telephone card for occasional long-distance calls. As with the 10-10 access codes, the rates may be higher than if you sign up with a preferred long-distance carrier. The UTC has a fact sheet on prepaid calling cards that is available on the commission’s web site or by calling 1-800-562-6150 to request a copy.

Even if you do not have a long-distance carrier, you would still be able to dial all toll-free numbers and will still be able to receive out-of-state calls.